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Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Butagira ..... (Uganda)
later: Mr. Anshor (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Indonesia)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly *(continued)* (A/60/80 and A/60/111)

Agenda item 62: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/60/61-E/2005/7, A/60/117, 128, 133 and 133/Corr.1, 138, 155, 156, 290 and A/60/377-E/2005/92)

Agenda item 63: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing *(continued)* (A/60/151 and A/60/377-E/2005/92)

1. **Mr. Tarp** (Denmark), representing the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People and speaking under agenda item 62, said that the Millennium Development Goals would not be achieved unless the most vulnerable group, persons with disabilities, was included. More than two thirds of such persons lived in developing countries and most of them were the poorest among the poor, lagging behind the standard of living enjoyed by even poor non-disabled persons. Poverty-eradication programmes should therefore always aim at providing the disabled with basic necessities. Moreover, since such persons needed education even more than the non-disabled, children with disabilities should benefit from affirmative action in all education programmes, without which they had no chance on the labour market. Special attention should also be given to women with disabilities, notably under the Millennium Goals, while care should be taken not to overlook the Millennium Goal of eradicating polio.

2. Referring to the ongoing negotiations for a United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which he was confident would become a reality by 2007, he welcomed the involvement of organizations of disabled persons in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee set up for that purpose. It was important for Governments to make regular contributions to the Voluntary Fund established to enable such organizations, particularly from developing countries, to participate in its sessions. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities would be revised so as to guarantee such persons full enjoyment and effective protection of all human rights.

3. **Mr. Chem Widhya** (Cambodia), speaking under agenda item 61, welcomed the emphasis that continued to be placed on the three core issues identified at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, namely, poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. However, the bulk of the world's population still suffered from poverty and its ills. A multilayered and multisectoral approach was needed to overcome that scourge. Accordingly, his Government had developed a national poverty-reduction strategy aimed at ensuring a justice system supportive of people's rights, a system of local governance that empowered people and communities, effective provision of public services and systematic efforts against corruption. However, national efforts to eradicate poverty would founder unless the international environment was conducive to the development process.

4. A particular obstacle to social development in his country was HIV/AIDS, against which his Government had similarly developed a national plan. He appealed to the international community to honour its commitments by giving assistance to countries affected by the pandemic.

5. The promotion of full employment was a priority for the Government of Cambodia, particularly in agriculture, a key sector, but also in tourism and labour-intensive industries and services. In order to ensure Cambodia's competitiveness among regional players in the global market, more attention would be given to the development of technology and knowledge-based industries.

6. Lastly, in the interests of social integration, the authorities were taking measures to promote gender equality, respond to the concerns of persons with disabilities, older and displaced persons, and ensure grass-roots participation in decision-making through decentralized governance.

7. **Ms. Al-Shamisi** (United Arab Emirates), said that, 10 years after the Copenhagen Summit, half the world population continued to lack the basic conditions for living with dignity. It was therefore important to make increased efforts to implement the recommendations of United Nations conferences on social development with a view to creating a society fit

for all where people would enjoy security, stability and prosperity.

8. The United Arab Emirates, for its part, had made notable progress in most of the social-development indices, as reflected in rising per capita income, increased government expenditure on education and health care, a higher percentage of women in gainful employment, lower post-partum and infant mortality and the eradication of dangerous diseases. Particular importance was assigned to human-resource development, including the provision of free education at all levels, to meet employment needs, especially in the private sector, which was the mainstay of the national economy. The Government also gave special attention to promoting the integration into society of troubled youth and disabled persons. It sought to enhance social solidarity in other ways as well, notably by supporting volunteer and humanitarian organizations, which had contributed significantly to welfare programmes and development programmes both nationally and internationally. She singled out in that respect her country's Red Crescent organization, which was active in 95 countries in the world.

9. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) welcomed the emphasis placed in the Secretary-General's reports dealing with social development on the essential rural component of national development as a mitigating factor against urban and rural poverty and large-scale migration. Stressing the importance of universal primary education, she said that the implementation of poverty-eradication strategies required the support of development partners, in particular through increased official development assistance. Referring with appreciation to the World Youth Report 2005, she said that in Uganda the participation of young people in decision-making was ensured at all levels, including the family, the community, schools and Parliament. Information and communication technology was important in facilitating such participation, with due regard for interpersonal and cultural norms.

10. The needs of older persons were of great concern, rendered more acute by the threats posed to family structures by poverty and disease, in particular HIV/AIDS which, if not curbed, would make ageing an unattainable privilege. She therefore welcomed recent developments within the United Nations system in favour of older persons, especially the follow-up being given to the Madrid Plan of Action adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing, referring in particular to the needs of developing countries and rural areas. She emphasized in that connection the contribution that could be made by volunteerism.

11. Concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, she looked forward to the successful conclusion of ongoing efforts to negotiate a United Nations convention on that subject and urged greater use of inputs from developing countries and increased support for such countries to conduct their own studies.

12. **U Maung Wai** (Myanmar) expressed satisfaction that the Declaration on the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, adopted by the Commission for Social Development in February 2005, had reaffirmed that enhanced international cooperation at the national level was essential for implementation of the Copenhagen commitments. He hoped that the financial mechanisms called for would soon materialize.

13. With respect to poverty alleviation, the Government of Myanmar had launched three development programmes to achieve balanced growth throughout the country and narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. On the issue of disability rights, it had taken measures to enable persons with disabilities to take advantage of rehabilitation services, participate in productive work and become more self-reliant. In addition, a new law was currently being prepared as part of the effort to ensure equal opportunities for such persons, both in education and in employment. Referring, in conclusion, to the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons, he said that the International Day of Older Persons had been observed nationwide in his country since 1999 in order to develop awareness of the needs of such persons and promote collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations, media, private entities and youth in caring for them. Myanmar remained committed to the Madrid Plan of Action and to creating a society for all ages.

14. **Mr. Alaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran), referring to the *Report on the World Social Situation 2005* (A/60/117/Rev.1), said it was regrettable that the 10 principal commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development and endorsed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration had not been implemented as expected. Certain policies and practices had exacerbated inequalities in many parts of the world, particularly in terms of access to education.

15. A shortage of human and financial resources continued to hinder the achievement of social-development goals. In some cases, rapid economic growth and liberalization had aggravated social and cultural problems. Protection for the older members of society was becoming a more pressing need as populations aged. In addition, specific policies and measures were needed to avert the disintegration of family life.

16. Governments bore the main responsibility for eliminating inequality, discrimination and social disintegration by enacting and enforcing appropriate laws, providing employment with adequate income, ensuring public participation in decision-making and policy implementation, investing in social development, caring for the vulnerable, providing opportunities for advancement, and maintaining peace, security and stability.

17. Despite the adoption by the General Assembly 10 years previously of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the *World Youth Report 2005* indicated some alarming trends with regard to poverty, lack of school enrolment and illiteracy among young people. Youth unemployment was highest in Western Asia and Africa and was exacerbated by globalization. Early pregnancy and the rate of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse among young people were still major sources of concern. All Governments needed to encourage investment to provide for the needs of young people, especially with regard to education and health care. Young people, particularly the most vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities, should be treated with dignity and with respect for their rights so that they would grow up to be responsible members of society. It was to be hoped that the ongoing efforts to draft a convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities would soon come to fruition.

18. Social development was a crucial element of the Millennium Development Goals. Increased international cooperation was needed to meet the targets by 2015, and developed countries, with their substantial capacities and resources, should shoulder the main responsibility in that regard. In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, the suffering of one country affected all countries. Collective action and renewed commitment, particularly on the part of developed countries, would help to bring about prosperity and well-being for all nations.

19. **Mr. Amolo** (Kenya), speaking on agenda item 61, said that the struggle to eradicate poverty, promote employment and foster social integration presented a profound challenge to many developing countries, including Kenya. Although much had been achieved in implementing the commitments adopted by the World Summit for Social Development, much still remained to be done. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development had emphasized the need to prioritize social development and had provided a framework for doing so. However, the commitments outlined in the Programme of Action had not been incorporated coherently into national laws, policies and programmes.

20. Kenya had launched initiatives for poverty reduction, such as a poverty-reduction strategy and the current economic-recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation. In addition, the Poverty Eradication Commission was coordinating public and private initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty. The recently launched Millennium Development Goals needs assessment and costing report indicated that Kenya required some $3 billion annually to bridge the funding gap in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Implementation of Goal 8, which called for a global partnership for development, would therefore be necessary if Kenya were to meet the targets by 2015.

21. Kenya had developed specific policies to address the needs of young people, the aged, women and the disabled. Young people, who constituted over 60 per cent of the country's population, were the hardest hit by poverty. The Government had financed rural youth-development projects aimed at creating jobs, and a sessional paper on youth policy was awaiting parliamentary debate. The implementation of universal free primary education and the adoption of the Disability Act 2004 had brought social and economic benefits but were also exerting extra pressure on the country's scarce resources. The Government needed external financial assistance to meet the challenges of raising the retirement age and introducing an affordable and accessible health-care plan.

22. Globalization and rapid technological advances had adversely affected Kenya's economy. Unfair competition, rising production costs and Western

agricultural subsidies had led to the closure of many industrial concerns. The resultant job losses had led to increased pressure on social services and amenities and constituted a threat to social integration.

23. Each country had an individual role to play in promoting social development, but collaboration would enable the desired results to be achieved more quickly. The necessary normative framework was in place; what was needed now was political will and active participation. Success would come if every country set its sights on the prize: the eradication of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

24. **Mr. Phanouvong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on agenda item 62, welcomed the *World Youth Report 2005*, which showed that progress had been made in a number of areas in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth. However, there remained many obstacles to further progress, which particularly affected young people in developing countries. Hunger, poverty, inadequate access to education, gender inequality, health problems, drug abuse and delinquency were the major problems for young people that still needed to be addressed by the international community. The complex nature of those problems and the linkages between them resulting from globalization meant that all nations had to work together to overcome them.

25. From the time of its foundation in 1955, the Lao Youth Union had played an active part in the struggle for national independence. Since the liberation of the country in 1975, the Union had become a mass organization with more than 200,000 members, 80,000 of whom were women. The Union's objectives were to promote solidarity among young people and involve them in national development, to promote education, to raise awareness of health issues, to inspire a spirit of patriotism, and to contribute to the promotion of peace, friendship, cooperation and development.

26. The Lao Youth Union also took part in the formulation of national youth policy and in efforts to promote the socio-economic development of the country. As a landlocked least developed country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic still faced difficulties in many areas. He therefore appealed to the international community to provide more assistance, particularly in the areas of education, health care, and information and communication technologies, so that his country could ensure a better future for its younger generation.

27. *Mr. Anshor (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

28. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo), speaking on item 61, said that, 10 years after the World Summit for Social Development, the socio-economic disparities between rich countries and developing countries had widened. His delegation endorsed the conclusions of the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, which highlighted the uneven progress made in achieving the goals adopted at the Summit and stressed that additional efforts were needed.

29. The Congo was determined to implement the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Summit. For that reason, despite its debt burden, it was paying particular attention to poverty reduction. Under its development policy, a detailed programme for the elimination of inequalities had been drawn up for 2004-2009, in line with the poverty-reduction strategy paper negotiated with the international financial institutions. The Government had allocated substantial resources to the implementation of the programme but also required the assistance of development partners.

30. Unemployment — particularly among young people, who made up more than 50 per cent of the country's population — was a major cause of concern to the Congolese Government. For that reason, it had introduced a programme for the reintegration of ex-combatants, which had already achieved some success. He expressed his Government's appreciation for the funding received for the programme from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the European Union. He also thanked the Government of Japan for its contribution to the UNDP "youth at risk" project in the Congo. Nonetheless, much remained to be done in order to create the conditions of lasting peace and security necessary for development, and the Congo counted on the support of its development partners in that endeavour.

31. HIV/AIDS was one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality in the Congo, and the Government had established a national plan to combat the pandemic for 2003 to 2007, as well as a National Council to Combat HIV/AIDS under the personal authority of the Head of State. His Government welcomed the announcement of a substantial grant

from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the recent commitment by the Group of Eight industrialized countries to ensure that African AIDS victims received the treatment they needed by 2010. It also welcomed the Group's commitment to increase official development assistance and its decision to cancel the debts of 18 of the most heavily indebted countries, most of which were in Africa. He encouraged the Group to come up with further proposals for development financing in addition to their debt-relief initiatives.

32. The objectives set out at the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved only through joint action by the international community. The Congo would continue to play its part in those efforts.

33. **Mr. Tesfu** (Ethiopia), speaking on item 61, welcomed the progress made in many areas of social development, as outlined at the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, but noted that progress was not consistent among all regions or among different groups within each country. In particular, unemployment had risen since the World Summit for Social Development and high levels of income inequality both within and among countries persisted.

34. Advances in social development at the global level had not fully materialized in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty continued to rise and more than one third of the population was undernourished. Both unemployment and underemployment in the region were high. Progress in democratization and good governance had furthered social integration to some extent, but the challenge remained enormous. Conflict, instability, drought and HIV/AIDS continued to hamper the region's social and economic development. The commitment made by world leaders at Copenhagen to accelerate development in Africa had yet to be fulfilled.

35. Ethiopia had taken important steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which, in its view, incorporated the major commitments of Copenhagen. It had adopted a sustainable-development and poverty-reduction programme and had begun implementing policies in various sectors focusing on poverty eradication. Some encouraging results had been achieved: for example, the rate of primary-school enrolment and the level of access to health services had increased. Efforts were also under way to improve social integration through reform of the civil service and justice system. Democracy was taking root, as shown by the holding in May 2005 of the country's third and most contested democratic election.

36. Achievement of the goal of social development was primarily the responsibility of Governments, but international cooperation was also imperative. He therefore welcomed the recent commitments of donor countries to increase official development assistance and to cancel the debt of the poorest countries. Ethiopia had done its share to promote social development through the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies. However, further progress would require assistance from the international community. The current low level of official development assistance per capita annually was not sufficient: the needs assessment carried out in Ethiopia had shown that an eight-fold increase would be required in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

37. Reaffirming his country's commitment to social-development ideals, he looked forward to the day when the Assembly could celebrate the eradication of absolute poverty and the restoration of dignity to all.

38. **Mr. Limon** (Suriname) said that sustained progress in social development had not been achieved, owing to the absence of an enabling environment. His delegation believed that the advancement of social development depended on the participation of all stakeholders and the ability to integrate social and economic policies that improved opportunities and quality of life for all.

39. Poverty remained one of the most discouraging challenges facing the international community. In an effort to minimize the vulnerability of the poor, Suriname had established a social-security system for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities and the poor. The Government had also formulated a development strategy involving the private sector, trade unions and the community, and had developed policies to facilitate access to labour markets and enhance small entrepreneurship.

40. Although the primary responsibility for economic and social development lay with each country, an increase in resources was needed to meet development goals. Economic downturns, declining health services and lack of international support all affected the ability

of Governments, in the developing countries in particular, to implement social policies required for the betterment of their people.

41. The recently concluded World Summit had reaffirmed the importance of development in increasing world security and prosperity. Member States had expressed their willingness to work towards global development and were now looking to the United Nations to show the way.

42. **Mr. Gill** (India) said that continued implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session was needed to ensure a coherent, people-centred approach to development. India was concerned about the uneven progress in the achievement of the goals of the Summit and felt that the only way to address the problem was through capacity-building in developing countries, with the cooperation of the international community.

43. The Indian Government had formulated several development strategies in the fields of poverty alleviation, demographics, education and health. As a result, poverty had fallen to 26 per cent; the right to work had been made a fundamental right; and every rural household was guaranteed 100 days of work per year.

44. India endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report on the role of cooperatives in the eradication of poverty and was paying close attention to the development of cooperatives in various areas, including agricultural production.

45. With respect to the United Nations Literacy Decade, literacy rates in India had increased to over two thirds and elementary education had been made a fundamental right. The Government was proposing to raise public spending on education and had set up a National Commission on Education to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

46. India wished to emphasize the importance of the work being done by the United Nations agencies and civil-society organizations to support Governments in their efforts to care for ageing populations. India fully supported the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and hoped that the ongoing negotiations on a convention on disabilities would reach an early conclusion.

47. **Mr. Sadukov** (Kazakhstan) said that, 10 years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, social-development issues were still on the agenda; indeed, the economic and social indicators of some countries had even worsened. Developed countries had an obligation to increase international assistance while developing countries were expected to utilize that assistance as efficiently as possible.

48. Kazakhstan had consistently implemented the decisions taken at Copenhagen and Madrid and remained committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Government had launched a comprehensive package of social reforms and had increased education and health budgets. Maternal and child health, care for the disabled and housing shortages were also being addressed.

49. Noting that education was a prerequisite for entry to the labour market, Kazakhstan had instituted a number of measures including compulsory primary education, free higher education and vocational training, education loans and social protection of students.

50. With respect to care for older persons, Kazakhstan believed that, in order to ensure implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the relevant United Nations institutions needed to cooperate closely with Governments by giving them technical and advisory support. The Kazakh Government was currently reforming its pension system and had instituted compulsory individual health insurance to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

51. In conclusion, he said it was vital that Member States and specialized agencies took coordinated action and implemented their obligations regarding the development goals and other basic documents on social development.

52. **Ms. Al-Hajiri** (Qatar) said that the Copenhagen World Summit and other recent conferences had provided a sound basis for economic and social development by establishing a basic human right to development. But there could be no true development without peace and stability, and greater efforts needed to be made to end conflicts.

53. Qatar had in recent years enacted many laws to promote development. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs, established by royal decree under the

leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, wife of the Emir, served all classes of society, including children, youth, women, older persons and the disabled. The Council had implemented a programme of educational integration for the disabled, and was developing a nationwide strategy for youth and older persons. The Declaration of the Doha International Conference on Ageing, held in April 2005, had been circulated in document A/60/377-E/2005/92. Qatar had also set aside $8 billion to endow two funds, one for education and one for health.

54. Qatar, in addition to efforts for national development, had also contributed generously to many international institutions and funds to help achieve the Millennium vision of reducing hunger and poverty. Qatar called for concerted efforts for comprehensive economic and social development, and for curtailing the negative effects of globalization in the developing countries, and especially the poorest countries.

55. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the 1995 World Summit for Social Development had made a significant contribution to the promotion of more equitable and people-centred sustainable development, particularly in the area of the rights of women and the disabled. However, the nature of development challenges had changed since then; problems such as HIV/AIDS, ageing and gender inequality presented a major threat to social development, economic growth and political stability.

56. One of the most serious challenges currently facing mankind was hunger. FAO estimated that some 800 million people in the developing world were chronically hungry. Trends during the 1990s had revealed that, while some low-income countries had managed to reduce hunger, the majority had not. In general, the successful countries were characterized by more rapid economic growth, slower population growth, lower rates of HIV infection and a higher ranking in the human-development index.

57. To achieve equitable social development, countries needed to comprehend their social and economic situation and the real needs of their people. With respect to HIV/AIDS, which had struck the rural poor in overwhelming numbers, effective solutions would have to take into account all dimensions of the rural and agricultural sectors.

58. FAO was ready to assist Member States in achieving the internationally endorsed development goals as soon as possible. Although tangible progress had been made on many fronts, the battle for more equitable social development would be won only when men and women had equal access to productive resources and when they could benefit from technical and financial support as well as good governance and the rule of law.

59. The goal of creating an enabling environment for social development required close cooperation among many actors at all levels. FAO was currently working with the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to make a genuine difference in the lives of the hungry and poor throughout the developing world.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.